

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Rural Electrification Administration  
Washington 25, D. C.

August 26, 1948

To : REA Field Representatives  
From : Claude R. Wickard, Administrator  
Subject: Action on Field Suggestions

Many constructive suggestions for the improvement of our agency's operations in the field were received at the REA field conferences in June. As was pointed out at that time, it is our intention to give serious study to each one of the suggestions and to put into effect every practical proposal as soon as possible. The Suggestions Awards Committee has been designated to assign responsibility for investigation of the practicality of each of the suggestions received.

This memorandum transmits a complete list of the suggestions received at all three conferences. The suggestions that have been given consideration to date are listed below together with an explanation of each. Subsequent reports will be made as the remainder of the suggestions are studied and acted upon.

Suggestion for future field conference (Suggestion No. 1-Roanoke-Application and Loans Division).

We, too, agree that the conferences were very beneficial to the REA program from many standpoints and similar meetings will be held more frequently if at all possible.

Prompt advertising and filling of vacancies and notification to applicants of action taken (2-R-A&L, 22-KC).

It is now the policy of the agency to advertise and fill all vacancies as soon as possible and to notify all applicants promptly of the action taken. There have been and possibly will continue to be cases where vacancies could not be filled immediately because, for example, the positions may be pending Civil Service approval, the interested supervisors may be on field trips, etc. Notification to the applicants may also be held up when additional vacancies are expected that can be filled through the use of the same bulletin. In the future every effort will be made to allow sufficient time for applications to be received before closing dates and to notify the applicants as soon as possible.

Resurveying of field jobs with view of reclassifying upwards (4-R-A&L).

In response to this suggestion, the Personnel Division will undertake a survey of all field positions to determine proper grades. When such a survey is completed all field personnel will be notified.

SEP 10 1948



Notifying fieldmen when headquarters personnel visit field (5-R-A&L, 7-KC).

The staff divisions and the members of the Administrator's staff are being asked to notify whenever practicable the chiefs of the line divisions whenever a visit to a borrower is undertaken. The line division chiefs will be responsible for notifying the interested field representatives of their divisions.

Increased per diem and mileage (6-R-A&L, 2-R-Eng., 5-R-Fin., 10-R-Mgt., 1-KC, 1-B-Mgt., 1-B-Fin., 1-2-3-B-Eng., 2-B-A&L).

REA field representatives receive the maximum per diem and mileage permitted under present legislation.

Improving traveler's report form (7-R-A&L).

A new traveler's report form has been devised as a result of a suggestion submitted earlier to the Suggestions Awards Committee. The new form provides a greater amount of space for the written report than was the case previously. It is a "snap-out" form; the required number of sheets and one-time carbons come assembled ready to put into the typewriter. The form is now in the process of being printed and should be available in about 60 days.

Providing recording machines for making field reports (8-R-A&L, 2a-R-Mgt., 12a-KC).

Field tests are now being made of a few recording machines purchased several months ago. When the results of these tests are available, the question of whether or not these machines can be furnished fieldmen will be decided with consideration given to practicability and the availability of funds.

Allowing official time for report preparation (9-R-A&L, 1-R-Mgt.).

It is recognized that as a practice most field people write their reports in the evening or over the weekend. That this practice is voluntary is appreciated, particularly since there is no policy which would require field people to write their field reports on their own time.

Field reports are an important part of the field representative's job and as such their preparation certainly warrants all the official time required to do the job. This is the agency policy. A contrary impression may have been created by instructions issued from time to time urging field people to make their field reports promptly. It is felt that the value of the reports is reduced when the preparation is delayed until the traveler reaches his headquarters a week or two after his visit to the borrower. Reports made immediately upon completion of a visit are best because they are made while events still are all fresh in mind.

In the future careful consideration will be given by those in headquarters who are responsible for the preparation of itineraries for fieldmen to allow sufficient time for the preparation of reports on official time as part of the assignments.



Providing filing equipment for field use (10-R-A&L).

The Administrative Services Division has received from a field representative of the Finance Division suggested plans and specifications for a portable file cabinet to meet the requirements of the field auditors. These plans and specifications have been submitted to a manufacturer's representative for an estimate on the cost of the cabinet to the Government. This same representative has been requested to design a filing cabinet that would be suitable for all field representatives, which will also be considered for purchasing. Any further suggestions as to the type and size of file cases desired will be welcome. You will be informed later of the final action taken on this suggestion.

Additional engineering personnel and more equitable territorial distribution (1-R-Eng.).

The budget for fiscal year 1949 provides funds for the employment of the following additional personnel for the Engineering Division:

Office Engineers	46
Stenos and Clerks	22
Field Engineers	20

The engineers employed may be shifted between office and field as conditions require and recruitment is progressing as rapidly as possible. All present personnel is requested to assist in every way in interesting outside engineers in the REA program. Advise your division chief of any prospects whom you may know with your recommendation of the action to be taken.

Closer contact between field and office personnel (2-R-Eng.).

The recent appointment of an Assistant Regional Engineer in each region who will maintain close working arrangements with field engineers through frequent visits to the field is expected to accomplish the results outlined.

Assistance in procurement of new cars (1-R-Fin., 4-B-Eng.).

We have been informed officially that car manufacturers have cancelled until further notice all fleet purchase agreements. Consequently, there is no prospect for some time that employees may obtain automobiles through the Government.

However, nearly all automobile manufacturers have factory representatives in Washington, and through these representatives the Administrative Services Division has been fairly successful in expediting delivery on cars for REA employees who have firm orders of long standing placed with local dealers throughout the country. This assistance is still available.

Providing auditors with punched and perforated columnar pads (4b-R-Fin.).

Punched and perforated work papers are now available and will be supplied on all future requests.



Pointing out inconsistency between payroll time report and division report on actual hours worked (4-R-Mgt.).

The two forms are designed for two different purposes. The time and attendance report is prescribed for all government agencies to justify the basic pay for eight hours of work and is not intended to show voluntary overtime. The semi-monthly time report is a temporary form designed to show actual hours worked. This information is used for budget and other workload estimates, and may eventually assist in getting enough staff so that less voluntary overtime will be required.

Earlier transmittal of itineraries and changes (6-R-Mgt.).

This suggestion is being called to the attention of all those responsible for handling itineraries. It must be borne in mind, however, that occasionally last minute revisions in itineraries may be unavoidable.

Poor quality of new typewriters (3-KC).

Approximately 18 months ago, 75 Remington portable typewriters were purchased. By and large they did not prove to be satisfactory, and 50 have already been returned from the field and declared surplus. Any field representative who has a machine, whether one of the remaining 25 or some other, that is not operating satisfactorily should note the following information.

A typewriter to be returned to headquarters for repair or exchange may be shipped express collect. A notation on the shipping ticket should be marked "to be converted to Government Bill of Lading at Destination."

In those instances where minor repairs are necessary and the cost of repairs will not exceed \$10, the repairs may be made locally and the reimbursement made to the employee on a regular travel voucher. When this procedure is followed the disbursement must be supported by a paid receipt reflecting the cost of the repairs and the serial number of the typewriter. This should be accompanied by a statement to the effect that repairs were considered to be an emergency because time was important and to ship the machine to Washington for repairs was not practical.

The difficulty that has been experienced with our new typewriters of all makes is unfortunate. However, they were the best that were available when they were purchased. During the present fiscal year no additional new typewriters can be purchased. The Treasury and Post Office Departments' Appropriation Bill, 1949, as passed by Congress, contains the following new provisions relating to the acquisition of typewriting machines by all agencies of the Government:

"No part of any money appropriated by this or any other Act shall be used during the fiscal year of 1949 for the purchase, within the Continental limits of the United States, of any typewriting machines (except bookkeeping and billing machines and typewriting machines for veterans under public laws administered by the Veterans Administration)."



How to keep power use program going without overloading systems (13-KC).

The question raised in the suggestion implies that a power use program is designed to, and will also result in, load building. This, of course, is not an accurate evaluation of our power use program. The true purpose of our power use program is to help REA consumers get the most benefit and the most profit from REA service. If there is a definite power shortage or insufficient capacity to deliver the power which the REA consumers would like to have, a properly directed power use program may well be used to promote the most efficient and beneficial uses of power that is available to the consumer.

In every case, however, there should be a definite attempt made in the power use program to help the consumer ascertain how he can get the most benefit from REA service. If a group of REA consumers can use more electricity profitably than is presently available, steps should be taken to supply additional power as quickly as practical.

Wise and judicious use of electricity is always the objective of the REA power use program.

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